



Are Multivitamins a Waste of Money?

Studies have shown mixed results so there isn't a clear answer for everyone. But the benefits from taking multivitamins likely outweigh any risk in the general population and there may be special benefits for older people.

The Physicians' Health Study II gave 14,600 male physicians age 50 and older either an ordinary multivitamin (Centrum Silver) or a placebo for 11 years. The vitamin takers had an 8 percent lower risk of cancer than those who took the placebo. When they looked at the results for men 70 and older, they found an 18 percent reduction in cancer. Men who came into the study with a lower intake of fruits and vegetables had a similar reduction in cancer.

So maybe there are some potential benefits for older men. How about women? We may know more, soon! A new study is underway with 18,000 women (aged 65 or older) and men (aged 60 or older). The study provides cocoa extracts (flavanols) and Centrum Silver or placebos for four years.

Big-name brands or a store brand multivitamin—which is best? Chances are the store brand has copied the name brand, and ingredient lists are almost identical.



What to Look for in a Multivitamin

- **Read the label.** No standard or regulatory definition is available for a multivitamin supplement—such as what nutrients it must contain and at what levels. Health professionals recommend that broad-spectrum multivitamins contain the following vitamins and minerals: vitamins A, C, D, E, and K, thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, vitamin B6, folic acid, vitamin B12, calcium, iron, magnesium, zinc, copper, selenium, chromium, and potassium. Don't rely on a multivitamin for calcium.
- **Check the percentages.** In general, choose a supplement that provides 100% of the Daily Value (DV) for most of the vitamins and minerals in that supplement. Some nutrients, like calcium and magnesium, are rarely included at 100% because the pill would be too large to swallow.
- **Choose a multivitamin designed for your age and sex.** Adult males and postmenopausal women need less than the DV for iron unless recommended by a physician. People over age 50 may need more B12 than younger people.
- **Don't overdo it.** Avoid multivitamins that exceed 100% of daily recommended values, because supplements are in addition to the nutrients in food, and some, in large doses, can build up and become toxic.
- **If you have questions, consult a healthcare practitioner you trust.**



A multivitamin is NOT a substitute for healthy food or a healthy lifestyle, but it can provide a nutritional back-up for a less-than-ideal diet.

There are special multivitamins for older adults. Are these necessary?

Older adults have a few different vitamin and mineral needs than younger people. For example, older adults do not absorb vitamin B12 from food as well, and their skin does not absorb vitamin D as efficiently. We also need more calcium.

While it is true that certain vitamin and mineral needs change as we age, a specially designed multivitamin for older adults with approximately 100% of any vitamin or mineral is the safest unless you have medical problems and the doctor has recommended something different.

Multivitamin References

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According to national surveys, more than half of U.S. adults take dietary supplements. Multivitamins are the most commonly used supplement. By the age 71 years or older, 48% of women and 43% of men reported taking a daily multivitamin.

Handwashing: A Win for Everyone

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) hand washing is one of the best ways to remove germs, avoid getting sick, and prevent the spread of germs to others. Think of it as a do-it-yourself vaccine! It's quick, it's simple, and it can keep us all from getting sick this winter. Make sure to use soap and wash for at least 20 seconds to remove and rinse off germs.



Hidden Hunger



One in eight older lowans does not have enough food and there is a good chance they keep it a secret. Older adults who care for their grandchildren are three times more likely to be hungry and not have a healthy diet

compared to adults not caring for grandchildren. It could be they are feeding the children and not themselves.

Do you know someone who struggles to buy the groceries they need? There is help! The Iowa Food Assistance Program (nationally known as SNAP or food stamps) helps people stretch their food dollars each month. Iowa has a special hotline to assist people with the application process. It is run by the Food Bank Association. 1-855-944-FOOD (3663) Please share this phone number.

When Should You Wash Your Hands?

- Before, during, and after preparing food
- Before eating food
- Before and after caring for someone who is sick
- Before and after treating a cut or wound
- After using the toilet
- After changing diapers or cleaning up a child who has used the toilet
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After touching an animal, animal feed, or animal waste
- After touching garbage



Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds



If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol

Take Action Corner

This month I will...

All Mixed Up Answers (page 4)
1. multivitamin
2. brand name
3. store brand
4. daily value
5. label
6. handwashing
7. pomegranate
8. hunger

Handwashing tips reprinted from <http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>.



Recipe of the Month

Curry Turkey Salad

Create a festive salad with fresh pomegranate seeds!

Serving Size: About

1 cup salad

Serves: 4

INGREDIENTS

Dressing

- 4 tablespoons plain Greek yogurt
- 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
- 2 to 3 teaspoons honey
- 1 teaspoon curry powder
- Salt and pepper to taste

Salad

- 2 cups chopped cooked turkey or chicken
- 1 cup seedless grapes, halved or 1 chopped medium apple
- 1/2 cup diced celery
- 2 tablespoons chopped nuts (whatever you have on hand)
- Top with a few tablespoons of dried red berries (cherries or cranberries) or fresh pomegranate seeds

INSTRUCTIONS

Mix the dressing in a bowl. Add the other ingredients. Chill. Don't have lime juice? Make the dressing with orange juice and reduce honey. Don't have Greek yogurt? Mix plain yogurt with reduced-fat sour cream for a creamier texture.

Adapted from <http://www.myrecipes.com/recipe/curry-turkey-salad>



Chair Stand

This exercise, which strengthens your abdomen and thighs, will make it easier to get in and out of the car. If you have knee or back problems, talk with your doctor before trying this exercise.

1. Sit toward the front of a sturdy, armless chair with knees bent and feet flat on floor, shoulder-width apart.
2. Lean back with your hands crossed over your chest. Keep your back and shoulders straight throughout exercise. Breathe in slowly.
3. Breathe out and bring your upper body forward until sitting upright.
4. Extend your arms so they are parallel to the floor and slowly stand up.
5. Breathe in as you slowly sit down.
6. Repeat 10-15 times.
7. Rest; then repeat 10-15 more times.

Exercise reprinted from

<https://go4life.nia.nih.gov/exercises/chair-stand>

All Mixed Up!

Unscramble this month's topic words!

1. iitintlvaumm _____
2. anmrdeban _____
3. ndrsatreob _____
4. aevlaliudy _____
5. alble _____
6. nhagsnahidw _____
7. negetpomraa _____
8. ngrheu _____

Tips for Storing Pomegranates

Once a pomegranate is picked it stops ripening but develops more flavor in storage. Similar to apples, they should be kept in a cool, dry, well-ventilated place, out of direct sunlight. Whole fruit can be refrigerated and will keep as long as 2 months. Fresh seeds or juice will keep in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.



Food Assistance can help you buy healthy food in Iowa. Visit <http://dhs.iowa.gov/food-assistance> for more information or contact your local Department of Human Services office. This material was developed by the Iowa Department of Public Health and funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, an equal opportunity provider and employer. If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov.

